

Ethical guidelines in yoga and Buddhism

Yoga offers five ethical practices, the five yamas, which are:

- **Ahimsa**, the practice of non harming, which helps develop kindness towards all being
- **Satya**, the practice of being truthful, which expresses the spiritual seeker love of the truth
- **Bramacharya**, the practice of using our energy (and particularly our sexual energy) wisely
- **Asteya**, the practice of non stealing, which helps develop generosity and non attachment
- **Aparigraha**, the practice of non attachment, which helps develop freedom

Buddhism offers five precepts or five rules of training as a system of morality for lay people :

- The first and most important precept is non harming.
- The second one is right speech, which is timely, true, gentle, beneficial, and kind
- The third one is abstaining from taking what is not freely given.
- The fourth one is to abstain from misconduct concerning sense-pleasures.
- The fifth precept is abstinence from mind altering drugs.

It is useful to see these as practice guidelines, rather than as rules to be followed. Seeing ethical behaviour as a practice, we can be kind to ourselves when we fail, and keep working at perfecting them.

Reflection ?

How can we, as yoga practionners, best respond with heartiness to the perillious crisis of our time ?
What qualities do we need to cultivate to respond effectively ?